

# Immersive Hallucinations vs. Spontaneous Imagination: Understanding Dream Experiences

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## Abstract:

In this paper, I will explore the intra-philosophical conflict regarding the nature of dream experiences, focusing on the debate between dreams as hallucinations and imaginative experiences. Jennifer M. Windt (2010, 2015) and Evan Thompson (2015), both leading figures in the philosophy of mind, offer contrasting perspectives on this issue. Windt posits that dreams should be categorized as ‘immersive spatiotemporal hallucinatory perceptual experiences,’ emphasizing the sensory and perceptual qualities inherent in dreaming. This viewpoint implies that the mind generates perceptions during dreams that mimic reality but are not grounded in external stimuli. Windt’s framework highlights how these perceptual experiences, though internally generated, possess a vividness that parallels waking perceptions. In contrast, Thompson challenges Windt’s stance by framing dreams as ‘spontaneous imaginative experiences.’ According to Thompson, dream content arises from the mind’s creative and imaginative faculties, emphasizing the spontaneous generation of novel ideas and scenarios during the dreaming state. This perspective highlights the distinction between experiences that mimic perceptual reality (hallucinations) and those that involve a more unrestricted and imaginative mental process. So, the question arises: ‘How does Thompson’s explication of dreams as ‘spontaneous imaginative experiences’ provide a more comprehensive understanding of dreams?’

In this context, Thompson’s interdisciplinary approach integrates insights from neuroscience, phenomenology, and both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of dream experiences. His focus on the first-person perspective and subjective experience highlights the richness of individual dream experiences, which often transcend what can be externally measured or observed. By incorporating diverse philosophical traditions, Thompson broadens the cultural and conceptual scope of his analysis,

recognizing the influence of different contexts on the perception and interpretation of dreams. So, this paper will focus on the defense of Thompson's concept of dreams as 'spontaneous imaginative experiences,' contrasting it with Windt's perception of dreams as hallucinations. It presents dreams as a unique way of spontaneously imagining a world and connecting with our dream ego, offering a holistic view encompassing the biological, experiential, and cultural dimensions of dreaming.

**Keywords:**

*Dream experiences, Hallucinations, Imagination, Perceptual experiences, Spontaneous imaginative experiences*

**References**

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